



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on February 26th 2023 at 10:45, meeting at Bethesda Chapel.

Whilst some are able to meet in person, others we know are still at home. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Our service today is being led by Alec, with Trevor playing the piano for the majority of the songs.

Alec begins by welcoming everyone, and inviting all to join in with the opening prayer, shown on the screen:

"We pray that this day in our little church will be a day that everybody remembers. We pray it will be a day that brings glory and honour to the Name of our loving Lord. That God is so mightily present, that no-one will be unaware of how real, how great and how near to us He is. May God bless us all anew each day from now on that Galligreaves is truly the place from which people speak saying, "That is where the living God and His praising people are." "Not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord." Amen

Our opening hymn today was played by Trevor on the piano:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty
Early in the morning Our song shall rise to Thee
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty
God in three persons Blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy There is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty
All Thy works shall praise Thy name In earth and sky and sea
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty
God in three persons Blessed Trinity

Authors: John Bacchus Dykes, Reginald Heber CCLI SONG # 1156 Copyrights, Words and Music Public Domain. CCL No 5664

Tony then shared our notices for the week, reminding us that there would be a five minute time of prayer immediately following this service, and a Tea Party on Saturday afternoon, March 4th in aid of the Leprosy Mission.

We were then invited to share in a time of praise and worship, with Trevor playing the first and third and Alec the middle song, beginning with:

**Come now is the time to worship.
Come now is the time to give your heart.
Come just as you are to worship.
Come just as you are before your God.
Come.**

One day every tongue will confess You are God;
one day every knee will bow.
Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose You now.
Come now is the time to worship....

Willingly we choose to surrender our lives
Willingly our knees will bow
With all our heart soul mind and strength We gladly choose You now
Come now is the time to worship....

Author: Brian Doerksen CCLI Song Number 2430948 Copyright: ©1998 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire) (Vineyard Music UK) CCL No 5664

The splendour of the King, clothed in majesty;
let all the earth rejoice, all the earth rejoice.
He wraps himself in light and darkness tries to hide,
and trembles at his voice, and trembles at his voice.
**How great is our God,
sing with me: how great is our God,
and all will see how great, how great is our God.**

And age to age He stands, and time is in His hands;
beginning and the end, beginning and the end.
The Godhead, Three in One, Father, Spirit, Son,
the Lion and the Lamb, the Lion and the Lamb,
How great is our God....

Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.
Name above all names, worthy of all praise; my heart will sing: how great is our God.
How great is our God....

Authors: Chris Tomlin, Jesse Reeves and Ed Cash, CCLI Song 4348399; Copyright © 2004 worshiptogether.com songs/Six Steps Music/
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In Christ alone my hope is found, He is my light, my strength, my song;
this Cornerstone, this solid Ground, firm through the fiercest drought and storm.
What heights of love, what depths of peace, when fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All, here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! - who took on flesh, fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness, scorned by the ones He came to save:
till on that cross as Jesus died, the wrath of God was satisfied -
for every sin on Him was laid; here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay, light of the world by darkness slain:
then bursting forth in glorious day up from the grave He rose again!
And as He stands in victory sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
for I am His and He is mine - bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me;
from life's first cry to final breath, Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand:
till He returns or calls me home, here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

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Reading 1 Peter 2, 4-10 Graham

As you come to him, the living Stone - rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him - you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says:

'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'

Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,
'The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,'
and,
'A stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'

They stumble because they disobey the message - which is also what they were destined for.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Alec then gave his Message:

LEGO MESSAGE

"We are basically looking at two things today; the first is how we can be enabled to encourage one another in the Lord; the second is at how God is building up His church here in Blackburn.

These two points, encouraging one another in the Lord and God building up His church here in Blackburn are related by the common goal, the common aim, the common purpose, the common target that they have; that is to say that the Name of the Lord may be glorified, honoured and worshipped. Encouraging one another builds up the kingdom of God on earth. As we pray, "Your Will be done, your kingdom come", we live this out and encourage one another to follow Him.

(Show the Bible!) This is our guidebook, this is our daily bread, this is the Word of the Lord; and in it we read a lot about encouragement. Well encouragement might seem an easy word to say and encouraging someone might not seem to be too difficult a thing to do.

The Hebrew word in the Old Testament for encouragement is hazaq meaning to strengthen, prevail, harden, be strong, become strong, be courageous, be firm, grow firm, be resolute, and be sore. (Strong's Concordance) This is a very common word in the Bible, but it's more often interpreted as a form of strong and only translated nine times as our English word encourage.

While it's different than the Greek word used in the New Testament, it is unique in the idea of giving strength to or repairing. When we encourage we are infusing strength, repairing, and holding up our fellow disciples.

Oikodome is the Greek New Testament word for encourage it means the act of building, building up, edifying, edification; the act of one who promotes another's growth in Christian wisdom, piety, happiness, holiness; or a building of any kind. (Strong's Concordance)

I like the word picture of this architectural term! Encouragement is brick by brick, word by word, action by action building towards Jesus. Not only building up, but building into— encouragement builds each follower of Christ into a home, both a dwelling place for God Himself and a location for a fallen world to encounter a risen Jesus.

(Show a brick from the porch.)

(Distribute lego bricks.)

(Look at the three bible verses. Let the congregation read them.) (Talk about them).

1) 1 Thessalonians 5:11 This is what we are to do." **11** Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." (**Ask the congregation**), "How can we do this?"

2) Ephesians 4:29 This includes what we should and should not do. "**29** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." (**Ask the congregation**), "Which of these do you think we are more likely to do?"

3) 1 Peter 2:4-5 This is what God is doing. "**4** As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – **5** you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house^[a] to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." He is building us like living stones into a spiritual house. How does that work?

Each one of us has a lego brick or duplo brick which we were given a few minutes ago.

Some of them look like this: **(screen picture of isolated red brick.)**

This red brick has a specific form. It has an attractive colour and a practical shape. It has very precise measurements attached to it. It may look very nice and very useful but on its own it is honestly not a lot of use. Through its bright colour and its geometric shape, through its newness and the central role it has in the picture it might feel it needs no other brick to fulfil its role. Do you see where I am coming from?

(Let's look at another picture.) Here we see six basically different coloured bricks each with the same shape and size. We might at a glance think they fit well together. But we see straight away that although they may appear to be close to one another they are not connected. There is no order, no

result, no product, and no genuinely creative function being fulfilled by these bricks. They might very probably make it to the Tate Modern in London but even there they would just be being looked at and no more. They are anything other than constructive and as you can probably see they arouse interest but no more.

How many combinations are possible using 6 lego bricks is the question written above on the slide. Their being together is a matter of mathematical interest but no more, their being together serving only as a kind of game or quiz function.

The third picture shows three identical collections of variously coloured and variously sized bricks. The impression is more of chaos than order. The bricks are not connected, just lying around waiting to be used or not used. They themselves have no interest in being connected or productive. They are not serving any real purpose or indeed any purpose at all. There is no life in them and it does not look as if that will change. They need someone to select them, to choose them, to connect them together and to give them together a functional and meaningful form. Even though there are three large collections of bricks these collections are not connected together in any way. Attention is being drawn to the way in which they are presenting themselves.

At first glance the next bricks look more sensibly arranged and more functional. But the appearance is deceptive. Without someone coming and working on them nothing is going to become of them.

You see these stones are so different from us in so many different ways. Or are they?

Are we on our own happy as we are with an exactly measured out lifestyle and clearly formed way of life?

Are we spending time with others of a similar or perhaps similar appearance but not connected to them?

Are we involved with many different people with whom we have some similarities but living our time away more like a still-life photograph rather than being productive?

Are we lying around in a “drawer” of like-minded people minimally connected and held together but without any commitment?

Do you see where I am coming from?

Peter says to the believers in Jesus, to the followers of Jesus, to the disciples of Jesus: “but you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”

“We are living stones, being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

We are not like these stones, these lego and duplo bricks. We are alive. We are connected to the Lord. We should be filled every day with the Holy Spirit of God and empowered by the Word of God to declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

“Once we were not a people, but now we are the people of God; once we had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” That is who we are.

This message has just one last slide, just one big step.

Please take the lego blocks that you were given at the beginning. Have you done that?

Now look carefully at them. Are you doing that?

What are you holding on to? They are just lego blocks aren't they. They are just blocks.

May I ask you just one question?

Where or what are the blocks in your life that you are holding on to?

What is blocking you from opening up further to what God wants to do in your life?

Maybe ask God to show you what it is that may be blocking your spiritual growth?

Maybe listen to God through His Word?

There are many things that may be blocking our spiritual growth; maybe it is our pride?

Maybe it is our disobedience?

Maybe it is unforgiveness?

What is it that you are holding onto?

We are living in a broken society. People say that they acknowledge God but their lives tell a different story. God's ways are rejected, people go their own ways, choosing their own priorities without consulting God. It says in Hosea 8:4-6, with their silver and gold people make idols for themselves to their own destruction. God will smash our idols into little pieces; He will destroy them.

Cry out to God. Bring to him whatever is troubling you now. He longs to hear you.

Get rid of the blocks; throw away the blocks. Let go of the lego blocks now as a sign of your willingness to follow the Lord in all things. Instead of holding on to the things blocking your relationship with God, your relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ and your spiritual growth let go of the blocks. Trust God. Become and live "like living stones, being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Let go and let God."

Prayers of intercession were then led by Shirley:

"On this first Sunday in Lent loving God, we remember today how much Christ loved us, how much he was willing to sacrifice and endure for our sakes. Teach us to follow.

You set before him the need to choose; between the way of self and the way of the cross, the way of the world and the way of love, the way of life that leads to death and the way of death that leads to life. Teach us to follow.

We thank you for the choice he made and all that lay behind it, the faith that gave him the inner strength to resist temptation and accept your will, the courage to take the path of suffering and death, the love which guided all. Teach us to follow.

Lord of all, accept us now, as we are, despite our many feelings. Forgive us for forgetting you, and renew us through your Holy Spirit. Help us to recognise that Christ is with us now as we meet together in his name, and teach us that through him you are with us always, speaking, guiding, encouraging, enriching, wanting and waiting to touch our lives with your grace. Open our hearts to you and fill us with the peace that only you can give, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Dear Father God, this is the days that you have made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. We thank you for family and friends. A roof over our head, food on the table, education for

children, Doctors and nurses to help heal all wounds, parks, swimming pools, gyms and places for fun and recreation. But now we bring before you those who have no roof over their heads, sheltering in doorways, living in refugee camps. Those who have no or little food, struggling with the cost of living, sharing what little they have in war-torn countries like the Ukraine and Africa and the natural disasters in Turkey and Syria. Those young people in Iran and Afghanistan desperate for a good education to improve their lives, oppressed by corrupt Governments who are determined to hinder them, especially the girls and young women. Those young and old who do not have green places to exercise, play in and have fun, but live in extremely unhygienic conditions and have no clean water to drink let alone to bathe in. We know you hear our prayers dear Father when we pray in your will and with hearts of compassion, so we pray that the hearts of those in corrupt government will be changed, more Aid workers will hear your call, like Brian and Jacqui Chilvers in Chad who we continue to pray for. Protect them and others who are obedient to your call. Bless them with all they need and may they continually recall from the Scriptures that the Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead lives in them. And now Dear Father we bring our families, our church family and ourselves to you. In all our families there is sadness as we know and hear of those who are bereaved, sick in mind and body. We think especially today of Barbara's family but thank you so much that they and us were able to celebrate the life of dear Barbara a lady who was, and is, precious to you and us.

Now in the quietness of our hearts we bring before you those who need a special touch from you today.

Looking to the future now we thank you that Alec and the deacons were able to have an 'Away day' yesterday. We pray that as they laid bare their hearts before you and were aware of your presence with them, that they would hear you clearly about your mission for our fellowship here in Galligreaves. We pray too for a future meeting on the 2nd of March at 3 pm between our leadership team and the leaders from St Luke's that they may seek you for your will only in the way ahead for Galligreaves, and that we will be obedient to it.

As I finish the Lord, we pray that you will teach us to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Knowing that you are able to fill us; to trust in you always, come what may, knowing your love will never fail us; to offer you our worship through all we are and all we do knowing you alone are God. Teach us to follow. Amen."

Our final hymn, the Offertory hymn, was again played by Trevor:

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
thou my best thought, by day or by night;
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be,
thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Be though my breastplate, my sword for the fight
be thou my whole armour, be thou my true might

be thou my soul's shelter, be thou my strong tower;
O raise thou me heavenward, great power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only the first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, thou heavens bright sun,
grant me its joys after victory is won;
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O Ruler of all.

Ancient Irish, trans Mary Byrne, Eleanor Hull. CCL Song No 30639, Copyright: Words and Music Public Domain, CCL No 5664

After a short prayer of thanks, Alec invited us to sing the Doxology "Praise God from whom all blessings flow" to the slightly less familiar tune we sang last week.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Authors: Louis Bourgeois, Thomas Ken CCLI SONG # 56204 Public domain CCL No 5664

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, Amen.